

German Social Democracy and the Problem of Jewish Nationalism 1897–1917

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I

The twenty years between the emergence of political Zionism and the Balfour Declaration constituted a crucial period in the history of European Jewry as well as a turning-point in the evolution of modern Socialism.* These two decades witnessed a Jewish national renaissance in the Diaspora, mass migrations from Russia and Eastern Europe to America, the consolidation of political antisemitism and the beginnings of Zionist colonisation in Palestine. The European socialist movement had for the first time to confront the existence of a Jewish national problem. The position of German Social Democracy, the largest and best organised labour movement existing in the world at that time, was of considerable importance in influencing the attitudes of other socialists towards this new phenomenon. Moreover, the polarisation of socialist attitudes towards Zionism which we shall describe, in so far as it reflected a fundamental split between the traditions of revolutionary Marxism and democratic socialism is not without relevance for the confrontations of the present.¹

Two distinctly different positions towards Jewish nationalism were adopted by the leading reviews of the SPD, the *Neue Zeit*, which was edited by Karl Kautsky, and the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, founded and edited by Dr. Joseph Bloch.

What we shall henceforth designate as the Kautskyian position contains in embryonic form the seeds of the Communist, Trotskyist and the New Left critiques of Zionism.² The revisionist position, on the other hand, as exemplified by the contributors to Joseph Bloch's *Sozialistische Monatshefte* was sympathetic to the Jewish national idea and the progress of Zionist colonisation in Palestine.

Dogmatic Marxism in the period of the Second International was embodied in the figure of Karl Kautsky, the leading theoretician of German Social Democracy and the Pope of the international labour movement. It was Kautsky who came closest to applying the Marxist method of historical materialism in a coherent fashion to the Jewish national problem. For a number of reasons, this led Kautsky to argue that the Jews had no future as a separate national group. Though Kautsky was aware of the fact that Marx and Engels had under-

*This article is part of a broader research project on left-wing attitudes to antisemitism and Jewish nationalism. The author wishes to thank the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for its assistance in enabling this project to be completed.

¹See Walter Z. Laqueur, 'Zionism, the Marxist Critique and the Left', *Dissent* (December 1971), pp. 560–574. Also Robert S. Wistrich, 'Marxism and Jewish Nationalism: the theoretical roots of Confrontation', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* (June 1975), pp. 43–54.

²For the impact of Kautsky's views on German Social Democrats and Communists between the two world wars see George L. Mosse, 'German Socialists and the Jewish Question in the Weimar Republic', in *LBI Year Book XVI* (1971), pp. 123–151.

estimated the dynamic of the national struggles which had unfolded in Europe since 1848, he did not seek a fundamental revision of their views on the national problem. Essentially, Marx and Engels regarded the bourgeois nation-state as a transitory stage in historical development, which would disappear with the victory of the proletariat in each country. This was the futurist viewpoint adopted in the Communist Manifesto.³ However, their disappointment at the failure of the 1848 Revolution led Marx and Engels (especially the latter) to invoke the pseudo-historicist Hegelian notion of "historic" and "ahistorical" peoples to justify the right of certain nations to self-determination and to deny this same right to smaller, more backward nationalities. Thus they took it for granted that the Germans and Italians were entitled to their national unification but in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, they reserved this right solely for the Hungarians and Poles.⁴ On the other hand, the so-called "counter-revolutionary" Slav nations of Austria-Hungary, which had frustrated the movement for German national unity in 1848, were supposedly condemned by historical development to disappear.⁵

Though Kautsky and his Austro-Marxist disciple Otto Bauer recognised that the predictions of Marx and Engels concerning the Slav national movements in Eastern and South-eastern Europe were mistaken, they did not take this into account in their analysis of Jewish nationalism.⁶ Instead, they depicted the Jewish "nationality" in Russia and Eastern Europe as the fossilised offshoot of an "ahistorical" people. In contrast to the analyses in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, they did not take seriously the national aspirations of the huge reservoir of non-assimilated Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe. They believed that the process of de-nationalisation visible among Jews in Germany and Western Europe was essentially irreversible and would eventually result in the assimilation of East European Jewry. Kautsky in particular insisted that demographic and socio-economic trends among West European Jewry were of paramount importance and proved that the Jews, as a collectivity, were in the process of self-dissolution.

In the Kautskyian perspective, the Jews were not a race, a nation or even a people, but a "caste" with certain quasi-national attributes, which was on the point of disappearing.

³See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. I, Moscow 1962, p. 51. In their *Communist Manifesto* (1847), Marx and Engels argued that "the supremacy of the proletariat" would cause the abolition of national differences and antagonisms. For recent discussions of Marxist theory on the national problem see Georges Haupt, Claudie Weill, 'Le legs de Marx et Engels sur la question nationale', *Studi Storici* (1974) Nr. 2, pp. 270–324 and Albrecht Martiny, 'Marxismus und nationale Frage', *Deutschland-Archiv* (November 1975), Jg. 8, pp. 1176–1180.

⁴For Engels's assessment of the national problem with regard to Italy see *Marx-Engels Werke*, East Berlin, vol. 13, pp. 225–268. On the Polish problem, W. Conze (ed.), *Karl Marx, Manuscripte über die Polnische Frage* (1863–1864), 's-Gravenhage 1961.

⁵Roman Rosdolsky, 'Friedrich Engels und das Problem der "geschichtslosen" Völker' (Die Nationalitätenfrage in der Revolution 1848–1849 im Lichte der "Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung"), *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. IV (1964), pp. 87–283.

⁶For Kautsky's views on the national question, see 'Die moderne Nationalität', *Die Neue Zeit*, (1887), pp. 392–405, 442–451, 'Das Judentum', *Die Neue Zeit* (1890), pp. 23–30, 'Der Kampf der Nationalitäten und das Staatsrecht in Österreich', *Die Neue Zeit* (1897–1898), Bd. I, pp. 516–524, 557–564.

"If one wants to characterise the role played in the Middle Ages and even today by the Jews in Eastern Europe, one can do this much better by describing them as a 'caste' than as a nation. It is not among the nations with which we are concerned here, but among the castes of India that we find phenomena which correspond to the status of the Jewish community as it has been constituted since the destruction of Jerusalem and the advent of Christianity. The efforts made to preserve the Jewish community as a nation are in reality nothing but attempts to perpetuate its existence as a particular caste. Such an aspiration would be inexplicable in a modern State. It can only develop under the thumb of the infamous domination of the Muscovite bureaucracy or the Rumanian boyars."⁷

The Jews were a unique case, not because they had preserved their "nationality" in spite of lacking a common territory or a common language, but rather because the "laws" of historical development allowed them no future as a nation. In the course of a polemic with Otto Bauer, whose general view on the Jewish national problem he shared, Kautsky observed:

"Certainly, the Jews speak many languages. But do the Jews who speak German not form part of the German nation, those who speak French, part of the French nation? It is only in Eastern Europe that the Jews feel themselves to be a particular nation, but there they speak their own language, and not Hebrew, but a corrupted German – the Yiddish which marks them off from their surroundings."⁸

What had preserved the Jewish nationality in the Middle Ages and later in Eastern Europe was not, however, the Jewish religion or the Yiddish language, but the socio-economic function of the Jews as merchants and usurers in a pre-capitalist society, he argued.

There is a straight line which runs from this Kautskyian analysis of the Jewish national problem to the theories evolved by Lenin, Stalin, Otto Heller, Abram Léon and more recent neo-Marxian critics of Zionism.⁹ Common to all the communist, Trotskyist and new leftist exponents of Kautskyianism is their conviction that the Jews are a product of capitalism, and that with its fall, the Jews would lose their illusory national characteristics. In his seminal *Rasse und Judentum*, first published in the *Neue Zeit* in 1914, Kautsky identified the "chimerical" attributes of Jewish nationalism with the archaic heritage of the ghetto.

"Precisely the compulsory congestion in a small space – which today has created the illusion of a Jewish nationality – also produces Jewish misery. With the disappearance of the latter, the conditions for a Jewish nationality will also disappear."¹⁰

In other words, Kautsky was convinced that only the special conditions in the Russian Pale of Settlement had prevented the Jews from merging completely with their surrounding environment. Once they were treated as free and equal citizens, their nationality would dissolve along with the ghetto milieu that had nourished it. This would be a process in no way comparable to the tragic extinction of the Red Indians in North America or the forced assimilation of other nationalities in the Russian Empire. On the contrary, it would be a pro-

⁷Karl Kautsky, 'Nationalität und Internationalität', *Die Neue Zeit* (1907–1908), Bd. I (Ergänzungsheft, 18th January 1908), p. 7.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹For an analysis of neo-Marxist critiques of Jewish nationalism, see Robert S. Wistrich, 'The Marxist concern with Judaism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 9, No. 4 (July–August 1975), pp. 1–6.

¹⁰Karl Kautsky, 'Rasse und Judentum', *Die Neue Zeit* (Ergänzungsheft, 30th October 1914), p. 93.

gressive step for the Jews, liberating them from the historic curse of poverty, pogroms and antisemitism.

"It seems to me, however, that for the Jew himself, the ghetto, which is the form of life of Jewry, is not a phenomenon evoking nostalgic memories. The friends of human progress have even less cause than the conservative Jew to shed a tear over the disappearance of Jewry."¹¹

Crucial to Kautsky's whole argument was his distinction between the Jews who "have become an eminently revolutionary factor" and Jewry (*Judentum*) or rather traditional Diaspora Judaism, which "has become a reactionary factor".¹²

Kautsky argued so passionately against Jewish nationalism and Zionism, precisely because he saw in it a legacy of medieval obscurantism, of narrow-minded ghetto Judaism – in contrast to the universality of the great revolutionary Jews from Spinoza and Marx to their contemporaries in the German, Jewish, Polish and Russian workers' movements. Kautsky's dualistic image of the Jewish people was not untypical of the attitude of many orthodox Marxist intellectuals in the German party, whether they were Jews or Gentiles. Many of them might have agreed with Kautsky's harsh verdict on Jewish history, his dismissal of ghetto Judaism as a wholly negative phenomenon:

"Judaism is even a weight of lead attached to the feet of the Jews who seek to progress; it is one of the last remnants of the feudal Middle Ages, a social ghetto which is still maintained in the consciousness after the real ghetto has disappeared. We have not completely emerged from the Middle Ages as long as Judaism (*Judentum*) still exists among us. The sooner it disappears, the better it will be for society as well as for the Jews themselves."¹³

Kautsky and those Marxists who thought like him in the *Neue Zeit* believed implicitly in the enlightenment distinction between the Jews as individuals and the Jews as a nation. The emancipation of Jewry meant to Kautsky its dissolution, just as it had done to the men of the French Revolution, to the young Hegelians and Karl Marx, and to Lenin and the Russian revolutionaries.¹⁴ The concept of Jewish nationhood was for German-Marxist orthodoxy an outgrowth of incomplete Jewish emancipation in the semi-feudal societies of Central and Eastern Europe.

As viewed by the disciples of Kautsky, the advocates of Zionism postulated a fictitious "Jewish solidarity" in place of the natural proletarian solidarity, forged by the universal class-struggle against capitalist exploitation. Kautsky had attacked this idea of Jewish solidarity on many occasions. In an important article written in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, he blamed the anti-semitic massacres, in part at least, on those Jewish capitalists in the West who had advanced loans to the same Tsarist autocracy which oppressed their poorer co-religionists in Russia.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 67. Kautsky believed that only the forced segregation of the ghetto with its attendant civil and political inequality enabled Jewry to maintain itself: "Es löst sich auf, verbindet sich mit seiner Umgebung, verschwindet, wo der Jude als Freier und Gleicher betrachtet und behandelt wird."

"The unscrupulousness of international Jewish and Christian capital, and its instruments, makes it an accomplice of the Kishinev infamy. Jewish solidarity, the solidarity of Jews from all classes has become an empty phrase, as soon as more than a few farthings are involved."¹⁵

The SPD leader, August Bebel, made a similar point in the 1906 edition of his well-known pamphlet on the attitude of German Social Democracy towards antisemitism. While denouncing the barbarity of the Russian pogroms in the most outspoken manner, he stressed that the Russian Jews could not count on the solidarity of their capitalist brethren in Western Europe but only on that of the international working class.¹⁶

Kautsky's strenuous opposition to Jewish nationalism and Zionism was one aspect of his broader rejection of the concept of Jewish solidarity, as something intrinsically reactionary. This is particularly evident in his constantly repeated assertion that Zionism aimed at the enforced separation of Jew from non-Jew – an accusation later taken up by the Russian Bolsheviks. Kautsky regarded racial separation as a cardinal doctrine of Zionism and in his *Rasse und Judentum* he argued that Jewish nationalism was nothing but a bastardisation of anti-semitic race theories.¹⁷ In this remarkable anticipation of modern anti-Zionism, Kautsky was supported by Gustav Eckstein, an Austro-Marxist contributor to the *Neue Zeit*, himself of Jewish descent, who wrote of an "inner relationship" between racial antisemitism and Zionist ideology.¹⁸

This had been one of Kautsky's favourite themes as far back as 1903, when he attacked Zionism for accepting the antisemitic thesis that the Jews were only a *Gastvolk* in the Diaspora. Commenting on Herzl's fruitless negotiations with the Tsarist Minister of the Interior, von Plehwe (who had been responsible for the Kishinev pogrom), Kautsky observed that Zionism sought to divert the Jewish masses away from their historic role of helping to overthrow Tsarist absolutism.¹⁹ The Zionists, by stressing Jewish separatism, would merely deepen the gulf between the Jewish and Gentile worker, thereby condemning the Jewish masses to isolation and weakening the Russian revolutionary movement. Zionism, according to Kautsky, could

"... only reinforce the antisemitic feelings of the popular masses, in so far as it increases the segregation of the Jews from the rest of the population and brands them even more

¹⁵Karl Kautsky, 'Das Massaker von Kischineff und die Judenfrage', *Die Neue Zeit* (1902–1903), Bd. 2, pp. 308–309.

¹⁶August Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus*, Berlin 1906, p. 36.

¹⁷Karl Kautsky, 'Rasse und Judentum' (1914), *loc. cit.*, pp. 82–83. Kautsky based his grossly misleading equation of Zionism with racism on a book by Dr. Ignaz Zollschan, *Das Rassenproblem. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der theoretischen Grundlagen der jüdischen Rassenfrage*, Wien and Leipzig 1910. Zollschan, an Austrian anthropologist and a dedicated Zionist, had published his study specifically to combat the antisemitic theories of Wagner, Dühring and Houston St. Chamberlain. This did not deter Kautsky or Gustav Eckstein from smearing him with the stigma of racism.

¹⁸In his review of Zollschan's book in *Die Neue Zeit* (1910–1911), Bd. I, p. 60, Gustav Eckstein wrote: "Die Vertreter des Nationalitätsprinzips im Judentum sahen sich daher geradezu genötigt, sich bei Geltendmachung ihrer Ansprüche auf dasselbe Rassenprinzip zu berufen, dass die erbitterten Gegner der Juden, die Alldeutschen als Waffe gegen sie gebrauchen."

¹⁹Karl Kautsky, 'Das Massaker von Kischineff', *loc. cit.*, p. 308.

than previously, as an alien nation, which, according to its own outlook, has nothing to expect on Russian soil."²⁰

In his *Rasse und Judentum*, Kautsky carried this argument even further, openly accusing the Zionist movement of being an accomplice of the most reactionary, pogromist régime in the world. The aim of Zionism was to separate Jews from non-Jews:

"Zionism meets antisemitism half way in this striving, as well as in the fact that its goal is to remove all Jews from the existing States. There is so much in common between Zionism and antisemitism on these points, that there have been Zionists, who expected the gracious promotion of their objectives from the head of the orthodox Russian people, from the fountain-head of antisemitism in the world, from the Russian Tsar."²¹

Far from regarding Zionism as an authentic national-liberation movement of the Jewish people, Kautsky saw in it "a spoke in the wheel of progress", a reactionary ideology which aimed at preserving the racial purity of the Jews through the creation of a "world ghetto" in Palestine. ("*Palästina als Weltghetto zur Absonderung der jüdischen Rasse von den anderen Rassen, das ist das Ziel des Zionismus geworden.*")²² Even the new trend of socialist Zionism was denounced with no less vehemence by Kautsky and other contributors to the *Neue Zeit*.

In 1914 Kautsky argued that socialist Zionism aimed to inculcate in the Russian Jewish masses suspicion and distrust of their Christian class-comrades. The socialist Zionists had been partially successful in their purpose because, according to Kautsky, there was no large, well-organised Jewish factory proletariat in Russia which was sufficiently amenable to the ideology of proletarian internationalism. Hence socialist Zionists had been able to exploit a latent fear that the victorious Russian proletariat might in the future mistreat the Jews no less than did the antisemitic Black Hundred gangs.²³

Kautsky's assault on Zionism was a consistent feature of his Marxist approach to the Jewish problem, based on his dogmatic belief that proletarian internationalism and class struggle excluded any specifically Jewish struggle for national emancipation. In 1903 and 1914 he had depicted the Zionists as tools of the antisemitic Tsarist autocracy. After 1917 he came to see in Zionism an instrument of British imperialism and colonialism in Palestine.²⁴

Kautsky was, in any case, convinced that the Jew, as the archetype of urban man, could no more be turned into a farmer than the "Indo-Germanic" city-dweller. Without agriculture, the new Zion could never be built and the Jew as "homo urbanus" could not go back to the land and reverse 2,000 years of Diaspora history.²⁵ The Zionist idea was completely utopian for how could one expect a hereditary caste of merchants, financiers, intellectuals, doctors and lawyers to succeed in establishing socialist colonies in the wilderness?

In 1914 statistics also appeared to favour Kautsky's additional argument that

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Kautsky, 'Rasse und Judentum', *loc. cit.*, p. 78.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 82.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁴See the English translation from the 2nd edn. of *Rasse und Judentum*, which was published under the title, *Are the Jews a Race?*, London 1926, p. 209.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 185.

Palestine was a backward, undeveloped land which could never support a large immigrant, Jewish population. The industrial infrastructure of roads, railways, harbours, modern plants and machinery was lacking as a result of Turkish neglect over the centuries of Palestinian economic development. Palestine lacked basic raw materials like iron, steel, timber and coal as well as a large home market or the prospect of substantial capital investment.

Only a thin trickle of 26,000 Jews had made their way to Palestine in the period between 1881 and 1908, compared to the 1,600,000 Jews who had emigrated from Russia, Rumania and Austria-Hungary to the United States and the 300,000 who had gone to Western Europe in the same period. The 10,000 Jewish colonists farming on Palestinian soil seemed like a drop in the ocean compared to this great migration.²⁶

Kautsky made great play of this apparent lack of tangible progress in Zionist colonisation before 1917, assuming much too readily that there was no real prospect of an independent Jewish homeland in Palestine.²⁷ His dismissive verdict on Zionism only three years before the Balfour Declaration reveals how little disposed most orthodox Marxists in Central Europe were to taking the Jewish national movement seriously:

"Zionism at one time wished to become a movement of the Jewish proletarian masses, but it is increasingly becoming a mere sport of Jewish philanthropists and literati . . . All that it will ever be able to produce is a lot of talk and no results."²⁸

II

Kautsky's opposition to Zionism as a petty-bourgeois movement which allegedly aimed at restoring the ghetto was shared by an influential group of his Jewish revolutionary colleagues in the SPD. Even a revisionist like Eduard Bernstein remained distinctly cool until 1917 to the concept of Jewish nationalism and continued to emphasise in his pamphlet of that year on the tasks of World Jewry that:

"I am no Zionist, I feel myself too much a German to be able to be one."²⁹

In an article for Martin Buber's periodical *Der Jude* in 1917, Bernstein observed that: "I have a sense of solidarity with Jews whenever they are treated with disdain on account of their descent" – but he could not bring himself to join any "specifically Jewish association", let alone the Zionist organisations in Germany.³⁰

²⁶Kautsky's data came from a study by Curt Nawratzki, *Die jüdische Kolonisation Palästinas*, München 1914, which had arrived at quite different conclusions concerning the viability of Jewish settlement in Palestine.

²⁷'Rasse und Judentum', *loc. cit.*, p. 82.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Eduard Bernstein, *Von den Aufgaben der Juden im Weltkriege*, Berlin 1917, p. 32.

³⁰Eduard Bernstein, 'Wie ich als Jude in der Diaspora aufwuchs', *Der Jude*, II (1917–1918), p. 187.

Three years earlier Bernstein had written in Kautsky's *Neue Zeit* that Zionism was

"a kind of intoxication which acts like an epidemic. It may, and presumably will, also pass away like one. But not overnight. For in the last analysis it is only a part of the great wave of nationalistic reaction which has overflowed the bourgeois world and seeks to break into the socialist world as well. And this is sufficient reason why Social Democracy should take it seriously and subject it to a fundamental critique."³¹

Though Bernstein did become more sympathetic to the aspirations of Poale-Zion after 1917, thanks partly to the efforts of Zalman Rubaschoff, later renamed Shazar (who during the First World War had been studying in Berlin as an "enemy alien"), his reservations about Zionism are significant.³² By temperament and political conviction, he was much closer to the general outlook of Joseph Bloch's *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, of which he was one of the guiding spirits, than to Kautsky's dogmatic Marxism. But like many German-Jewish liberals and socialists, he – at least until the First World War – disapproved of efforts to foster Jewish national consciousness. Formal Jewish emancipation in Germany had in his view eliminated the need for adopting such an outlook, and in an earlier article for the *Neue Zeit* in 1894 Bernstein had argued that:

"... every excuse for isolation, for a special Jewish solidarity as against non-Jews has been eliminated, and where anything of the kind still exists, it must be opposed as energetically as possible."³³

Where Bernstein differed from Kautsky and came nearer to the line followed in Bloch's *Sozialistische Monatshefte* was in his growing concern after 1900 with the deteriorating situation of Russian and Rumanian Jewry, who still did not enjoy any civil rights. Following his election as a socialist deputy for Breslau, Bernstein made a maiden speech in the German *Reichstag* in 1903, in which he evoked the insufferable conditions of Rumanian Jewry. He drew a stark picture of their plight as aliens in Rumania, disqualified from the professions and ownership of land, yet obliged to do military service and subject to special taxes. Bernstein called on the German government as co-signatory of the Berlin Congress agreements of 1878 to put pressure on Rumania to abide by her guarantee of Jewish civil equality.³⁴

Bernstein was also profoundly shocked by the Kishinev pogroms and appeared

³¹Eduard Bernstein, 'Der Schulstreit in Palästina', *Die Neue Zeit* (1913–1914) Bd. I, p. 752. Bernstein's article was partly a defence of his friend Dr. Paul Nathan, the founder of the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*, whose philanthropic and cultural activities in Palestine had been criticised by Jewish nationalists. Nathan was an assimilationist who strongly opposed the Zionist movement and believed that only complete assimilation with the non-Jewish population would secure full emancipation for the Jews in Russia, Eastern Europe and other countries. In 1914 this viewpoint was still as congenial to Bernstein as it was to the Marxist wing of the SPD. (On the *Hilfsverein* see the essay by Moshe Rinott, 'The Zionist Organisation and the Hilfsverein. Cooperation and Conflict (1901–1914)', in this Year Book, pp. 261–278 – Ed.)

³²For a first-hand account of Bernstein's sympathies with Poale-Zion after 1917 see Zalman Shazar, *Or Ishim*, Tel-Aviv 1955, II, p. 27, in Hebrew.

³³Eduard Bernstein, 'Das Schlagwort und der Antisemitismus', *Die Neue Zeit* (1893–1894), Bd. 2, pp. 236–237.

³⁴See *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, X. Legislaturperiode, II. Session 1900/03, vol. 10 (10th March–30th April 1903), pp. 8756–8759.

to recognise that the Kautskyian theory of assimilation was inapplicable to the five million Jews living in the Russian Pale of Settlement.³⁵ In a book review of the remarkable sociological study of Russian-Jewish workers by Sarah Rabinowitsch, written in 1903, Bernstein acknowledged that there were passages in Marx's *Zur Judenfrage* which were open to severe criticism – a point which he was to develop in another essay many years later.³⁶

This evolution in Bernstein's attitude towards the Jewish national problem encouraged the young Chaim Weizmann to believe that he might succeed in winning over the veteran German socialist to Zionism. A letter written by Weizmann in August 1902 to his future wife tells of a conversation with Bernstein in Berlin:

"I had a long talk with Bernstein (the famous one) and his daughter in Berlin. I took him to task for taking up the cause of the Armenians and not taking up the Jewish cause. He declared: 'Wenn ich jüdisches Gefühl hätte, ich wäre Zionist. Vielleicht kommt es.' Together with him, we cursed the assimilationists. In the journal we shall be publishing, Bernstein will write against the assimilationists: he is on the road to Zionism and his daughter has paid her shekel. Kasteliansky [at that time a Russian-Jewish student in Berlin] has been working on them adroitly."³⁷

Indirect confirmation of this remarkable statement comes in a letter written by Karl Kautsky in January 1903 to Motteler, commenting ironically on Bernstein's intercession in a dispute between the Zionists and the SPD, concerning the archives of Moses Hess.

"Nichts wäre schöner, als wenn Bernstein sich zum Zionismus revidierte, und wenn ich dabei mithelfen könnte, möchte ich es tun. Die Zionisten brauchen einen Propheten, Bernstein braucht Gläubige für sein Prophetentum und wir brauchen ihn nicht. Also wäre allen Beteiligten geholfen. Man sollte T. Herzl und Nordau auf die neue Kraft aufmerksam machen."³⁸

In spite of Weizmann's hopes and Kautsky's ironic speculations, Bernstein did not endorse Jewish nationalism in this period, nor did he support the demands of Jewish workers in Eastern Europe (especially Galicia) for cultural-national autonomy. Like Kautsky, he believed that the cultural needs of the Jewish masses in Austria-Hungary had to be subordinated to the requirements of proletarian unity and he dismissed the non-Zionist Jewish nationalism of a Nathan Birnbaum as distasteful and ridiculous.³⁹ Only during the First World War did Bernstein change his position and adopt the view that Jewish national

³⁵*Dokumente des Sozialismus*, Stuttgart 1903, Bde. II/III, pp. 344–346.

³⁶*Ibid.* In his review of Rabinowitsch's *Die Organisationen des jüdischen Proletariats in Russland*, Karlsruhe 1903, Bernstein wrote of Marx's essay on the Jews: "Wir erkennen vielmehr an, dass die Marx'schen Aufsätze über die Judenfrage neben vielen tiefen Ausführungen auch recht anfechtbare, auf flachen Rationalismus hinauslaufende Sätze enthalten." See also his critical remarks in an article for a Dutch socialist periodical, 'Die Joden in de Duitse Sociaal-Democratie', *De Socialistische Gids* (November 1921), No. II, pp. 971 ff.

³⁷See *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, vol. I, Oxford University Press, London 1968, p. 389. Weizmann's letter, dated 29th August 1902, was written in Russian. For further details see the chapter on Bernstein in my doctoral dissertation, *Socialism and the Jewish Problem in Germany and Austria 1880–1914*, University of London 1974, pp. 419 ff.

³⁸*Motteler Nachlass*, International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), 2222/I, Kautsky-Motteler, 9th January 1903.

³⁹See Bernstein's review of *Das Stiefkind der Sozialdemokratie*, Wien 1905, by Matthias Acher (Nathan Birnbaum), in: *Dokumente des Sozialismus* (1905), Bd. V, pp. 298–299.

demands for special minority status in Eastern Europe were justifiable and compatible with socialist theory.⁴⁰

There were several reasons for this change in his outlook on the Jewish problem after 1914. Bernstein was doubtless aware that a number of German-Jewish intellectuals with whom he was in contact like Martin Buber, Franz Oppenheimer and Richard Lichtheim were attracted to Zionism despite their assimilation to German society. He was increasingly concerned by the latent "civilised" antisemitism which still persisted in government circles, among students and academics, in the bureaucracy and the army, notwithstanding the temporary decline of *Radauantisemitismus* in Germany.⁴¹

Above all he was shocked by the failure of the Socialist International to prevent the outbreak of war in Europe, and the unseemly haste with which some of his German socialist colleagues volunteered to participate in the mass slaughter of the trenches. The ultra-patriotic stance of certain circles in German Jewry who ostentatiously rallied to the cause of the fatherland also deeply disillusioned him. The result of these disappointments was his remarkable pamphlet of 1917, *Von den Aufgaben der Juden im Weltkriege*, which was written in response to a request from the socialist-Zionist paper in New York, *Yiddisher Kemfer*.⁴²

The real target of his polemics was, however, the calculated assimilationism of those Jews who had made the cause of German chauvinism and even racial incitement against the allies their own speciality.⁴³ This ran completely contrary to Bernstein's vision of the special task and duty of World Jewry, to act as mediators and peace-makers among the nations. The cosmopolitan mission of the Jews was to oppose every kind of nationalistic propaganda, precisely because they were citizens of all the belligerent countries involved in the World War, and members of a race which had renounced its own national destiny in favour of its responsibilities to the larger family of mankind.

Bernstein's pamphlet was inspired by the ideal of *Weltbürgerlicher Patriotismus* which he regarded as a synthesis of all that was best in the Jewish heritage.⁴⁴

⁴⁰In his unpublished manuscript entitled 'Die demokratische Staatsidee und die jüdisch-nationale Bewegung' (*Bernstein Nachlass*, International Institute of Social History, A. 114), written during the First World War, Bernstein sought to reconcile democratic socialism with the ideas of the Jewish national movement.

⁴¹Eduard Bernstein, 'Der Schulstreit in Palästina', *loc. cit.*, pp. 751–752.

⁴²Bernstein, *Von den Aufgaben*, p. 7.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 29–31. See also Eduard Bernstein, *Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten*, Leipzig 1930, p. 49.

⁴⁴See Eva G. Reichmann, 'Der Bewusstseinswandel der Deutschen Juden', in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916–1923*. Ein Sammelband herausgegeben von Werner E. Mosse unter Mitwirkung von Arnold Paucker, Tübingen 1971 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 25), pp. 511–612, for an excellent description of the changing self-consciousness of German Jewry during the First World War. Dr. Reichmann points out that the organ of the C.V. (Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens) considered it urgent, "auf die frivole Leichtfertigkeit des Juden Bernstein zu verweisen, der für sein von allen Seiten als vaterlandsfeindlich gebrandmarktes Treiben dem Judentum die Verantwortung zuschieben möchte". *Im deutschen Reich*, XXIII (December 1917), p. 499 (quoted in Reichmann, *loc. cit.*, p. 522) – On the relations between the C.V. and Social Democracy altogether during the two decades preceding the First World War see now Arnold Paucker, 'Zur Problematik einer jüdischen Abwehrstrategie in der deutschen Gesellschaft', in *Juden im Wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890–1914*. Ein Sammelband herausgegeben von Werner E. Mosse unter Mitwirkung von Arnold Paucker, Tübingen 1976 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 33), pp. 501–504.

The ethical, pacifist foundations of Bernstein's socialism were adapted to fit what he considered to be the categorical imperative of Jewish history –

“... das zu pflegen, was die Völker verbindet, und dem entgegenzuwirken, was sie trennt und Hass zwischen ihnen säet.”⁴⁵

Although the *débâcle* of the First World War later spurred Bernstein to adopt a more sympathetic view of Jewish national aspirations, his attitude to Zionism was until 1917 a kind of half-way house between the orthodox Marxism of the *Neue Zeit* and the revisionism of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. What marked him off from most other German-Jewish intellectuals in the SPD was his refusal to dismiss antisemitism and the Jewish problem in Russia and Eastern Europe as an altogether secondary issue.

This attitude had been as characteristic of German-Jewish socialists like Karl Höchberg, Paul Singer, Hugo Haase and Kurt Eisner as it was of the East European émigrés like Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek, Leo Jogiches and Parvus who came to play an important role on the Left Wing of the German socialist party. These Russian and Polish émigrés who were internationalists by temperament, background and Marxist conviction had little time for Jewish nationalism, though they were familiar enough with the social conditions that had produced it in Eastern Europe.⁴⁶

In so far as Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches and Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus) had a coherent position on the Jewish national problem, they subscribed to the Kautskyian thesis that it could only be resolved by an all-Russian revolution and the victory of international socialism. This was the attitude expressed by Parvus in an early article for Kautsky's *Neue Zeit* in 1893 on the emergence of a Jewish labour movement in Tsarist Russia.⁴⁷ Like Rosa Luxemburg and Jogiches, Parvus welcomed the adherence of Jewish workers in Russia to the international proletarian front against Tsarism as an encouraging development. The Jewish question was for Parvus primarily a problem of how to achieve full working-class emancipation by overthrowing the yoke of the Tsarist police-state.

In his article Parvus described the speeches made by Jewish workers in Vilna during a May Day rally in 1892 as a splendid example of the ideals of international working-class solidarity. Like Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches, who in 1893 published these speeches in Geneva,⁴⁸ Parvus emphasised the rejection by Russian-Jewish workers of the “Palestinian” (i.e., *Hovevei Zion*)

⁴⁵Eduard Bernstein, *Von den Aufgaben*, p. 49.

⁴⁶On the attitude of internationalist Jews to this problem, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, London 1976, especially ch. 4 on Rosa Luxemburg.

⁴⁷Parvus was a Russian Jew who came to play a very important role in the SPD during the revisionist controversy at the end of the 1890s. His first contribution to Kautsky's review was written under the pseudonym, I. Ignatieff and entitled ‘Russisch-jüdische Arbeiter über die Judenfrage’, *Die Neue Zeit* (1892–1893), Bd. I, pp. 176 ff.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 178. Leo Jogiches, possibly in association with Rosa Luxemburg (his most intimate collaborator), had published the Vilna speeches as a pamphlet in Russian, entitled *The First of May 1892. Four Speeches of Jewish Workers*. He also wrote an enthusiastic review of the speeches in Polish for the SDKP organ, *Sprawa Robotnicza* (January 1894), which was edited by Rosa Luxemburg.

solution to the Jewish question. The emergence of an ideology of class struggle among the Vilna workers was all the more important

“... weil es in Russland geschieht und weil es seitens jüdischer Arbeiter geschieht.”⁴⁹

The Jewish proletariat suffered from the same exploitation as the working class of other nationalities in the Russian Empire.

In spite of the special conditions of the Russian Pale of Settlement and the artificial isolation encouraged by the Tsarist authorities, the Jewish workers had recognised that they could not stand outside the international class-struggle against capitalism. They realised that there could be no salvation in a future Jewish State in Palestine, which would inevitably be a class-state founded on exploitation.⁵⁰ The only solution for Jewish workers lay in class-struggle against their employers and participation in the general revolutionary struggle “for the redemption of humanity”.⁵¹

Parvus's article was the first contribution in the *Neue Zeit* which dealt concretely with the specific conditions of the Jewish masses in Russia, out of which both Zionism and the anti-Zionist Jewish labour movement had arisen. The subsequent articles covering this and the related issues of class-differentiation among Jews, emigration, the socio-economic conditions of Russian Jewry and the prospects of the Zionist movement, were all written by Jewish socialists from Eastern Europe who shared the Kautskyian perspective.

Some of these contributions were from representatives of the *Bund*, which in the years immediately after 1897 stood in the forefront of Russian Social Democracy, or else of the Jewish labour movement in Austria-Hungary. After 1898 the *Bund* came into direct conflict with Zionism as a rival mass-movement in the Jewish Pale of Settlement. In contrast to the Zionists, the *Bund* believed that Socialism and the proletarian revolution would solve the Jewish problem in Russia by putting an end to the pogroms, the mass emigration and legal-political obstacles in the way of Jewish emancipation.⁵²

Kautsky supported the opposition of the *Bund* to Zionism but saw the role of a Jewish labour movement primarily as one of integrating the Jewish proletariat into the general revolutionary process and the struggle against Tsarism.⁵³ In spite of his fulsome tributes to the combative heroism of the Jewish working-class movement led by the *Bund*, he made no mention of its programme for cultural-national autonomy and its internal evolution on the national problem which had brought it into conflict with the Russian and Polish Social Demo-

⁴⁹Ignatieff (Parvus), *loc. cit.*, p. 176.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 178. The following passage quoted by Parvus gives the flavour of the Vilna speeches. “Ja, meine Herren, wenn die Palästinenser anerkennen, dass dort dieselbe kapitalistische Ordnung sein wird, dieselben Fabriken, dasselbe Industriesystem, welches wir auch hier sehen, so muss gefragt werden, wo und worin wird da die Erlösung sein für den armen Juden.”

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵²See Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class-struggle in the Pale*, Cambridge 1970; Henry J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia. From its Origins to 1905*, Stanford 1972; and the recent study by John Bunzl, *Klassenkampf in der Diaspora. Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Arbeiterbewegung*, Wien 1975.

⁵³Karl Kautsky, ‘Rasse und Judentum’, *loc. cit.*, p. 77. “Die Bestrebungen nach *Einfügung* des jüdischen Proletariats in den Klassenkampf des gesamten russischen Proletariats haben ihren sichtbaren Ausdruck gefunden im jüdischen Arbeiterbund.”

cracy.⁵⁴ The orthodox German-Marxists preferred to ignore the national dimension of the Jewish labour movement and with the very occasional exception of Rosa Luxemburg in her Polish writings, did not enter into polemics with the *Bund*.⁵⁵ But Kautsky naturally subscribed to the anti-Zionism of the *Bund*, which seemed to reinforce his thesis that growing class-differentiation among Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe was a prelude to their future assimilation.

The anti-Zionist critique of Jewish socialists from Eastern Europe was based on the premise that Zionism, as a supra-class "national" ideology was incompatible with the concept of proletarian class-struggle and international solidarity. According to Max Zetterbaum, a leading propagandist of the Polish socialist party among the Jewish masses in Galicia, Zionism was a philosophy of despair produced by nationalist and clerical antisemitism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Jewish middle classes had found their road to assimilation blocked in Eastern Europe and in their disillusion assumed that antisemitism was an *eternal* historical category.

Zionism, for Zetterbaum, was a reaction of this Jewish middle class to its threatened proletarianisation, to the general social crisis which was already driving millions of poor Jews to mass emigration from Russia and Eastern Europe. Writing in the *Neue Zeit* at the turn of the twentieth century, he presented Zionism as a movement against the progressive ideals of emancipation and enlightenment which had inspired the Jewish working class. It was fostered in his view by the clerical, chauvinist outlook of the Jewish leadership in Eastern Europe who believed that the Jews were a "chosen people", destined to play a special role in history.⁵⁶ Zetterbaum counselled the Jewish workers to listen to lectures on Darwinism rather than the abstruse sermons of a "Maggid", to become "thinking Europeans" rather than model themselves on the obscurantism of "clerical Asiatics".⁵⁷

Zetterbaum's outspoken anti-clericalism was shared by the Lemberg correspondent of the *Neue Zeit*, who identified Zionism in Galicia with the reactionary machinations of the Hassidic oligarchy.⁵⁸ Both the Zionists and the Hasidim, he claimed, sought to keep the Jewish workers under the tutelage of their employers and of the "miracle-rabbis" (*Wunderrabbiner*). Medieval religious fanaticism and capitalist exploitation, the despair of the Jewish petty-bourgeoisie, the *lumpenproletariat* and other déclassé elements had coalesced in the Zionist

⁵⁴For a discussion of this omission, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jewish problem in Germany and Austria*, pp. 300–307. See also Moshe Mishkinsky, *National Elements in the Development of the Jewish Labour Movement*, Jerusalem 1965, pp. 178–186, doctoral dissertation in Hebrew.

⁵⁵Some of Rosa Luxemburg's Polish articles on the Jewish problem can be found in German translation in Iring Fetscher (ed.), *Marxisten gegen Antisemitismus*, Hamburg 1974, pp. 127–150. For her attitude towards the *Bund* see ch. 4 of my *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*.

⁵⁶See Max Zetterbaum, 'Klassengegensätze bei den Juden', *Die Neue Zeit* (1892–1893), Bd. 2, p. 4.

⁵⁷Max Zetterbaum, 'Probleme der jüdisch-proletarischen Bewegung', *Die Neue Zeit* (1900–1901), Bd. I, p. 329.

⁵⁸S. Häcker, 'Über den Zionismus', *Die Neue Zeit* (1894–1895), Bd. 2, p. 760. For another fierce attack on the East European *Wunderrabbiner*, see Max Beer, 'Die russischen und polnischen Juden in London', *Die Neue Zeit* (1893–1894), Bd. 2, pp. 730 ff.

movement, which was the enemy of the Jewish proletariat. The correspondent from Lemberg claimed that Jewish workers had recognised Zionism to be the ideology of their employers, and had broken up such meetings in Cracow, Lemberg, Kolomea and other Galician towns.⁵⁹

An earlier analysis of Zionism by a Jewish socialist from Bukovina also emphasised its *Mittelstand* character, as a movement which attracted those strata of Jewish society threatened with unemployment, economic decline or loss of social status.⁶⁰ The peculiar social stratification of the Jewish people in Galicia and Bukovina, with its mass of petty traders, middlemen and out-of-work artisans faced with imminent proletarianisation, had favoured the Zionist movement. But this analysis, which appeared in the *Neue Zeit* in 1895, although it acknowledged certain idealistic and progressive socio-economic features in Zionism, still underlined its utopian, petty-bourgeois aspects. Large-scale colonisation in Palestine was declared to be inconceivable in view of the infertile soil, difficult climate, lack of water and deforestation.

The emergence of political Zionism, following the publication of Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* in 1896, provoked a much more sharply negative response from the *Neue Zeit*. One of Kautsky's closest collaborators, a former rabbi from Württemberg, Jakob Stern, described Herzl's pamphlet as

"Ein schnurriges Projekt, genau so utopisch wie das verkrachte Freiland von Theodor Hertzka und in demselben Geiste negativer Tapferkeit konzipiert."⁶¹

Like other Marxist critics of Zionism, Stern dismissed the view that Jewish national solidarity was the answer to antisemitism as a childish, romantic aberration. He predicted that antisemitism would pursue the Jewish capitalists into their new State (if it were ever established) where it would abandon its mask as the "socialism of fools" and be revealed as the struggle of Jewish workers against their exploiters.

Even more scathing was Johann Pollack's discussion of Herzl's programme at the First Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897.

"All in all there is no reason for taking Dr. Herzl's Zionism as anything more than an ephemeral phenomenon, as a beautiful pose with which a nation that is no longer living steps for the last time onto the stage of history before its complete disappearance."⁶²

The orthodox Marxist view of Zionism represented in this article concentrated on unmasking its reactionary social features and its nationalist pretensions to organising Jewry on a supra-class basis. Pollack asserted for example that the Jews were an "artificial" nation, because there was no common language or culture between West and East European Jewry; the modern emancipated Jew knew nothing of Hebrew or of the national-religious tradition of Judaism; even Yiddish was not a "national" language, but a dialect which varied according to different regions in Eastern Europe.

From the social standpoint, Pollack compared the Zionism of Jewish workers

⁵⁹Häcker, *ibid.*

⁶⁰B. Emmanuel, 'Über den Zionismus', *Die Neue Zeit* (1894–1895), Bd. 2, p. 601.

⁶¹J. Stern, Review of Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* in *Die Neue Zeit* (1896–1897), Bd. 1, p. 186.

⁶²Johann Pollack, 'Der Politische Zionismus', *Die Neue Zeit* (1897–1898), Bd. 2, p. 597.

to the antisemitism of those Catholic workers who supported the Christian-social movement in Austria.

"The Zionism of this [Jewish] worker just like the "Christianity" of the Christian-social worker is the primitive form of a protest against his poverty, the causes of which he does not yet understand."⁶³

Max Zetterbaum, writing nearly three years later in the *Neue Zeit*, made a similar comparison between the Zionism of the Jewish bourgeoisie, seeking to exercise national sovereignty over the Jewish masses, and the desire of the Christian bourgeoisie to restore the glories of medieval Christendom.

"The one demands the 'Christian' State of the Middle Ages, the other the 'Jewish' State of Antiquity."⁶⁴

Zetterbaum attacked Zionism primarily as a "business undertaking" of the Jewish bourgeoisie, in which Jewish capital and not the working class would direct the colonisation project in Palestine. ("Es handelt sich also um ein Befreiungsgeschäft, nicht um einen Befreiungskampf.")⁶⁵ He particularly objected to Herzlian methods of diplomacy and the latter's attempt to win support for Zionism from imperialist powers like Turkey, Russia and Wilhelmian Germany, and from known enemies of the Jewish people like the Tsarist minister von Plehwe.

"The Jewish Social Democracy is revolutionary, it has nothing to do with Sovereigns and Diplomats, and the friends of Tsarism are its enemies."⁶⁶

But, like other Jewish socialist critics of Zionism, Zetterbaum was more evasive as to whether a Jewish "nationality" still existed in Eastern Europe.⁶⁷ Although, as Kautsky had pointed out, the Jews lacked a common language or territory, it was clear to Zetterbaum that in Eastern Europe they were much more than merely a religious community, and even in the West antisemitism had made many conscious of their Jewish identity. Zetterbaum therefore chose to describe the Jews of Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Rumania as having the characteristics of a *Stammesgenossenschaft* – a tribal community with its own customs, moral codes, historical tradition and folk-identity.

Thus, while he rejected the Zionist concept of pursuing Jewish "national" politics within the boundaries of another State, Zetterbaum did not rule out the possibility that the Jews might once again become a nation. Only future developments could determine whether the Jews would dissolve among the nations, but if

"... this Judaism bears within itself its own negation, if it leads to an exalted cosmopolitanism, to the rule of pure spirit and an all-encompassing love, we cannot help that."⁶⁸

After the 1905 Revolution, the polemics against Zionism intensified in character, with spokesmen of the *Bund* using the columns of the *Neue Zeit* to attack

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Max Zetterbaum, 'Probleme der jüdisch-proletarischen Bewegung', *Die Neue Zeit* (1900–1901), Bd. 1, p. 325.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 373.

Zionist-socialist efforts to win over Jewish workers in the Pale of Settlement.⁶⁹ According to the *Bund*, the Zionists sought to establish a class-state in Palestine and to mask the class-contradictions within Jewry by spurious appeals to national unity. This merely reinforced the "psychology of the ghetto" and tended to encourage political indifference among the Jewish masses in Russia.⁷⁰

An article in the *Neue Zeit* in 1905 on the economic conditions of the Russian-Jewish proletariat stressed, however, that the class difference between Jewish employers and workers in the Pale of Settlement was unbridgeable. Russian Jewry was divided into two hostile classes and, Zionist delusions notwithstanding, the Jewish employer feared the revolutionary militancy of the Jewish working class.⁷¹

The Zionists might preach their ideology of class-collaboration but there could never be any common interests between Jewish capitalists and proletarians, least of all in a "Palestinian" Jewish State. One *Bundist* writer in the *Neue Zeit* declared:

"We do not wish to discuss this not only senseless but harmful utopia any further; we say harmful utopia, because it can only deflect the Jewish masses, with its unrealisable pretensions, away from their daily struggle for their real interests."⁷²

The real interests of the Russian-Jewish proletariat could best be served, according to the *Neue Zeit*, by the overthrow of Tsarism. Only when the Russian people as a whole were freed from the autocratic yoke would the specific oppression and social disabilities of the Jews, which were the real cause of their poverty and unemployment, come to an end. This was also the view of a Jewish-Marxist critic of Poale Zionism, who condemned as myopic the Borochovist thesis that the Jews were doomed to permanent proletarianisation in the Pale or Settlement.⁷³ Once Russian absolutism had been overthrown, he argued, there would be no necessity to create an independent, national economic base for the Jewish people:

"With the fall of absolutism and the cessation of anti-Jewish persecution, once the libertarian movement has achieved its goal, Poale Zionism will have lost any foundation and sink helplessly into the sea of oblivion."⁷⁴

In any case, Bundist critics of Zionism were opposed to the whole concept of translocation to another country in order to achieve Socialism.

"Man kann ja den Sozialismus im alten Lande viel eher und mit weniger Mühe erringen."⁷⁵

⁶⁹See *Die Neue Zeit* (1903–1904), Bd. 2, pp. 537–538.

⁷⁰*Bericht für den Internationalen Sozialistischen Kongress in Amsterdam*, Geneva 1904, 'Die Tätigkeit des Allgemeinen Jüdischen Arbeiterbundes in Litauen, Polen und Russland ("Bund") nach seinem V. Parteitag', pp. 24–25.

⁷¹'Die ökonomische Lage des jüdischen Proletariats in Russland', *Die Neue Zeit* (1905–1906), Bd. 1, p. 336.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁷³A. Lampert, 'Der Poale-Zionismus. Eine Neue Strömung im russischen Judentum', *Die Neue Zeit* (1905–1906), Bd. 1, pp. 804–813.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 809.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 810. See also A. L. 'Die prinzipielle Stellung des jüdischen Arbeiterbundes', *Die Neue Zeit* (1905–1906), Bd. 2, pp. 702 ff.

The Zionist dream of Palestine could only sow more suspicion in the minds of the Christian workers concerning the reliability of the Jewish masses as an ally in the common revolutionary cause.

The attacks on labour Zionism in Kautsky's *Neue Zeit* invariably branded it as a petty-bourgeois ideology which sought to postpone the class-struggle until the Jews had won a foothold in Palestine. The German-Marxist review rejected the proposition that colonisation of Palestine could halt the process of stagnation and pauperism, mass emigration and antisemitism which afflicted the Jewish masses at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁶

Instead, under the editorship of Karl Kautsky, it consistently pursued the line that Zionism was a divisive, retrograde movement which weakened the unity of the international proletariat.⁷⁷ The official Kautskyian view of the orthodox Marxist wing in German Social Democracy, strongly supported by Jewish socialists (Bundists) from Russia and Eastern Europe, was that only an all-Russian revolution would solve the Jewish national problem and create the conditions for a speedy assimilation of the Jewish masses.

The overthrow of Tsarism would sweep away the feudal structures which had hindered the development of capitalism, it would abolish the Pale of Settlement and the ghettos which had nourished Russian and East European antisemitism. In Kautsky's words, written on the eve of the First World War, the revolution would bring about the dissolution of the Jews as a community, and at the same time their liberation as human beings. In the dialectical ascent of socialist society towards the creation of a "new man", the image of Ahasverus, the wandering Jew, would finally be put to rest:

"Er wird fortleben in der Erinnerung als grösster Dulder der Menschheit, der am meisten von ihr gelitten, der ihr am meisten geschenkt."⁷⁸

III

The Kautskyian theses concerning the Jewish problem were not shared by an influential group of "revisionists" in the German party, who contributed regularly to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. This prestigious monthly which had been founded in 1897 by Joseph Bloch, a Jewish socialist student born in Lithuania, had become the theoretical organ of democratic socialism in Germany during the revisionist debate at the end of the decade. Among its most important German contributors, editors and associates were Eduard Bernstein, whose book, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* (1898) had sparked off the revisionist controversy, Eduard David, Carl Legien (the trade-union leader), Ignaz Auer, Kurt Eisner, Paul Kampfmayer and Max Cohen-Reuss. Other regular con-

⁷⁶B. Rosin, 'Die Zionistisch-Sozialistische Utopie', *Die Neue Zeit* (1908-1909), Bd. 1, pp. 29-34.

⁷⁷See for example the remarks of Vladimir Medem, the leader of the *Bund*, in an article on 'Der moderne Antisemitismus in Russland', *Die Neue Zeit* (1901-1911), Bd. 1, p. 263. "Und gerade der jüdische Nationalismus hat sich als total unfruchtbar erwiesen. Bald weinerlich-pessimistisch, bald träumerisch-territorialistisch pendeln seine Anhänger hin und her, ohne die Kraft zu haben, um auf eigenen Füßen zu stehen."

⁷⁸Karl Kautsky, 'Rasse und Judentum', *loc. cit.*, p. 94.

tributors included the Austrian Social Democrats Victor Adler and Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel from France, Turati, the Italian socialist leader and Ramsay MacDonald.

Among the contributors who dealt specifically with the Jewish question and were sympathetic to Zionism was a group of German socialists including Ludwig Quessel, Julius Kaliski, Hermann Kranold and Gerhard Hildebrand.⁷⁹ Like Joseph Bloch, the pro-Zionist circle within the review tended to adopt a right-wing position on matters concerned with foreign policy and colonial affairs. Ludwig Quessel and Gerhard Hildebrand, along with other German socialists like Cohen-Reuss, Wolfgang Heine and Max Schippel backed the policy of Social Democratic imperialism on the grounds that German industrial, military and political expansion was beneficial to the working class. Some “reformists” like Eduard David, Max Schippel, August Winnig and the Austrian Pan-German socialist Karl Leuthner, believed that German imperialism was inevitable and historically necessary. Others held that colonial expansion was equally beneficial as long as it protected the economic interests of the German proletariat.⁸⁰

It is important to realise that colonialism at that time was not regarded in the negative light of today, and that most European Social Democrats saw no contradiction between the universal “civilising” mission of socialism and colonial expansion. Indeed, many Social Democrats before 1914 considered the peaceful penetration of backward regions of the globe by the European powers as a progressive phenomenon. Even Bebel and Kautsky had defended the establishment of *Arbeiterkolonien* and depicted European colonisation, especially in temperate zones, as a “Kulturtat” which had liberated new energies and productive forces.⁸¹

Other non-German socialists like the Belgians Emil Vandervelde and Camille Huysmans, the Dutchman Van Kol and the British Fabians also strongly defended the benefits of European colonisation for the mother country, the settlers and natives alike.⁸² It is significant that these socialists who stressed the blessings of European civilisation for the non-European – or (as we would say today) the Third World – were among the warmest supporters of Zionism. In this respect, the pro-Zionism of a Joseph Bloch, Quessel or Hildebrand in Germany had its equivalents in the defence of Jewish colonisation in Palestine by other European Social Democrats like Vandervelde, Huysmans, MacDonald, Jean Longuet, Léon Blum, Van Kol or Pernerstorfer. It was precisely the claims of Zionism to be a “civilising” movement which aimed at colonising a back-

⁷⁹For further details, see Zalman Shazar, *Or Ishim*, which also includes interesting chapters on Eduard Bernstein, Joseph Bloch and Leon Chasanowitsch.

⁸⁰The best study of pre-1914 German socialist attitudes to colonialism and imperialism is by Hans-Christoph Schroeder, *Sozialismus und Imperialismus. Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit dem Imperialismusproblem und der ‘Weltpolitik’ vor 1914*, Hannover 1968.

⁸¹See the article by August Bebel in *Vorwärts* (19th December 1897) and the pamphlet by Karl Kautsky, *Sozialismus und Kolonialpolitik* (1907). Also the earlier article by Kautsky, ‘Auswanderung und Kolonisation’, *Die Neue Zeit* (1883), pp. 366, 393 ff.

⁸²For a good example of the socialist defence of colonisation, see Emil Vandervelde, ‘Die Sozialdemokratie und das Kolonialproblem’, *Die Neue Zeit* (1908–1909), Bd. 1, pp. 737 ff.

ward, undeveloped country by modern methods of agriculture, which won it support from many Social Democrats.⁸³

It is equally significant that the anti-Zionist Marxists, who remained in a majority in Germany and elsewhere before 1917, did not challenge Zionism on the grounds that it was a colonialist movement. Even orthodox Marxists were little concerned at this time with the fate of indigenous peoples in colonised areas. The potential conflict between Jewish settlers and Palestinian Arabs played no role in the anti-Zionism of the Left in Germany or elsewhere before the First World War. The differences between the Kautskyian and the revisionist perspectives on Zionism had nothing to do with the "Arab problem" (which was scarcely mentioned) but rather with diverging theories of the Jewish question as it existed in Russia and Eastern Europe at the turn of the century.

As in the case of Kautsky's *Neue Zeit*, the majority of articles on this topic which were written for Bloch's monthly came from the pen of Jewish socialists who originated from Russia or Poland. They belonged to the territorialist trends within the Jewish workers' movement which in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution in Russia had been considerably strengthened. The largest of these territorialist currents was at that time, the Zionist-Socialists (S.S.). Like Poale-Zion, Zionist-Socialists rejected the *Galut* but they did not regard Palestine as the only possible Jewish national territory.

One of their leading theoreticians, Max Schatz-Anin, was the most prolific contributor on the Jewish question to the pre-1914 *Sozialistische Monatshefte*.⁸⁴ His socio-economic analyses were essentially Borochovist in so far as they stressed the abnormal occupational pyramid of the Jewish people in the Diaspora and the inadequacy of cultural-national autonomy (the *Bundist* programme) as a solution to the Jewish problem.⁸⁵ Schatz-Anin, like other Jewish socialist contributors to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, considered that lack of territory made the class-struggle of the Jewish proletariat in the Pale ineffective, but while advocating planned colonisation as a solution, he did not analyse the specific problems of Palestine as a land of immigration.

The Poale-Zion, on the other hand, one of whose outstanding agitators, Leon Chasanowitsch, wrote an important article for Bloch's review, always emphasised the centrality of Palestine in their programme. Like the Zionist-Socialists, they argued that without a "strategic base", i.e., an independent territory of their own, the Jews could not develop a normal occupational pyr-

⁸³See H. H. van Kol, *La Démocratie Socialiste Internationale et le Sionisme*, Lausanne 1919, for a sympathetic view of Zionist aspirations. Also the *Bernstein Nachlass* (International Institute of Social History) B. 10, 'Zwei sozialistische Antworten auf Karl Kautskys Artikel, "Die Aussichten des Zionismus"'. The two replies to Kautsky's attack on Zionism, by Emil Vandervelde and Camille Huysmans, both stressed the positive achievements of Jewish colonisation and cooperative labour in Palestine.

⁸⁴For Anin's view of the national question, see his *Die Nationalitätenprobleme der Gegenwart*, Riga 1910, which received a hostile review in the *Neue Zeit*. Anin was a leading advocate of Jewish socialist representation in the Second International. In 1917 he was a co-founder of the United Jewish Socialist Workers Party in Russia and of the left-wing Yiddishist "Kultur-Lige". He later joined the Bolsheviks.

⁸⁵M. Anin, 'Probleme des jüdischen Arbeiterlebens', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1909), Bd. 1, pp. 231 ff.

amid and the pre-requisites for a class-struggle which could lead them to Socialism. The Poale-Zion saw no prospect for establishing this "strategic base" anywhere except in Palestine.⁸⁶

The third territorialist movement, the SERP (Jewish Socialist Labour Party) also emphasised that lack of a territory hindered the national development of the Jewish proletariat. SERP, unlike the Zionist trends in Jewish socialism, considered, however, that achieving national-political autonomy for the Jewish masses and other oppressed minorities in the Russian Empire was a more urgent priority than the need for territorial autonomy.⁸⁷ Markus Ratner, one of the leading thinkers of SERP, also provided some of the most incisive criticisms of orthodox Marxist theory on the Jewish problem for the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*.

Although each of these differing trends within the Russian-Jewish labour movement offered its own specific solution to the Jewish national problem, there were some factors in their analyses which made them amenable to the pro-Zionist line of Bloch's review. In the first place, they tended to emphasise those socio-economic, political and linguistic conditions which separated the Jews from their non-Jewish environment in Russia and Poland. They argued that the low level of capitalist development among East European Jewry made the formation of a genuine factory-proletariat out of the declining Jewish artisan class very difficult.

Jewish workers, as a result of historic anomalies in the structure of the Jewish economy, were still divorced from the primary areas of production and concentrated in the final stages of production (e.g., consumer goods). Even when they lived in more industrialised regions of the Tsarist Empire, such as Russian Poland, the economic self-interest and antisemitism of Polish workers excluded them from work in the mechanised factories.

The low level of mechanisation among Jewish workers and the prevailing small-trader and artisan structure of Jewish life, created a "socio-economic ghetto" (Schatz-Anin) which would remain, even if the legal and political obstacles to Jewish emancipation in Russia were removed.⁸⁸ Jewish poverty, according to the analyses in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, was a specific national problem which could not be resolved by the overthrow of Russian absolutism. Its roots lay in the non-productivisation of the Jewish masses which could only be cured by some form of territorial concentration and planned colonisation.⁸⁹

The editor of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, though he did not actually write anything on the Jewish problem before 1917, provided the link between the concern of German and East European Jewish socialists with regard to Zionism.

⁸⁶For the classic exposition of Marxist-Zionist theory, see Ber Borochov, *Die Grundlagen des Poale-Zionismus*, Frankfurt 1969. Borochov had already worked out the guidelines of Poale-Zionism by 1905 in his famous manifesto 'Our Platform'.

⁸⁷M. Ratner, 'Die Nationale Autonomie und das jüdische Proletariat', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1911), Bd. 3, pp. 1333 ff.

⁸⁸M. Anin, 'Ist die Assimilation der Juden möglich', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1908), Bd. 2, pp. 614 ff.

⁸⁹M. Anin, 'Die Judenfrage als Wanderungsproblem', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1909), Bd. 2, pp. 849 ff.

Bloch, who had grown up in a strictly orthodox family in Königsberg where socialist ideas at a later date supplemented but did not altogether erase the Judaism of his home background, was admirably suited to playing this intermediate role.⁹⁰ He had come to Berlin in the early 1890s to study mathematics and physics, and became involved as a student in founding *Sozialistische Akademiker* (1895) which two years later became the celebrated organ of revisionist Marxism in the SPD.

Bloch's own socialist convictions, like that of many German-Jewish intellectuals, were essentially ethical and humanitarian in character. It was the Kantian categorical imperative and belief in the freedom of the will, rather than historical materialism and a deterministic confidence in the inevitability of Socialism, which brought him into the SPD. But unlike Bernstein, Eisner or Haase, he was no pacifist and strongly supported the nationalist trend within the German Social Democratic party.

He believed passionately in Franco-German rapprochement and hegemony over the European continent, the main obstacle being British policy, which Bloch spent his entire political life in opposing. Indeed, it was his hostility to Great Britain's "divide and rule" policies *vis-à-vis* Europe and the German Empire, which largely accounted for the support which the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* gave to the German government during the First World War. Bloch's advocacy of a protectionist *Kontinental Europa* strategy based on a separate peace with Russia and suspicion of Anglo-Saxon "imperialism" also caused his rift with the Anglophile and pacific Bernstein, with whom he had been closely associated before 1914.

Although the first contributions in Bloch's *Sozialistische Monatshefte* did not uncritically endorse Herzl's bourgeois Zionism, which was criticised along familiar Marxist lines, they did emphasise the idealistic component in the new movement. Thus Sergej Njeworow, while observing that Russian-Jewish workers had nothing in common with a movement run by middle-class doctors, lawyers and businessmen, acknowledged that

"... Zionism is called like nothing else to morally uplift Jewry."⁹¹

Though Njeworow did not think much of Herzl's eclectic efforts "to out-trump socialist demands" and reconcile cooperative labour with laissez-faire liberalism, he did recognise that Zionism had its roots in Central European antisemitism.

"It is perhaps no accident, that this new Zionist breeze has come over from Austria and specially from Vienna. It is well known that Austria is now the classic land of antisemitism – the result: Jewish misery, material and moral, cannot fail to appear, and the pre-requisites for a strengthening of national sentiments are consequently at hand – once more you have the famous trinity: Jew-hatred, Jewish misery, Zionism."⁹²

But a reviewer, commenting in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, on Karl Kraus's

⁹⁰See the important article by Charles Bloch, 'Der Kampf Joseph Blochs und der "Sozialistischen Monatshefte" in der Weimarer Republik', *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, Tel Aviv 1974, Bd. III, pp. 257–289.

⁹¹Sergej Njeworow, 'Der Zionismus', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1897), p. 651.

⁹²*Ibid.*

satirical anti-Zionist pamphlet, *Eine Krone für Zion* (1898) was critical of the view that Zionism was merely an abstract idea provoked by West European antisemitism. He reproached the Viennese writer with having ignored "the tragic conditions of life of the Russian-Jewish proletariat" which were the real driving-force of the Zionist movement.⁹³ Moreover, there was a socialist element in Zionism which gave it an appeal to Jewish workers submerged in the poverty and exploitation of the ghetto.

This was also pointed out by Adele Schreiber in her review of the *Lieder des Ghetto*, written by the Yiddish poet, Morris Rosenfeld.⁹⁴ Adele Schreiber observed that Zionism complemented, rather than contradicted the socialist vision of future redemption from suffering and oppression. The dual curse from which the Jewish proletariat suffered – economic deprivation and racial persecution – necessitated a dual form of emancipation which would fuse the national-religious messianism of a return to Zion with the proletarian dream of Socialism.

"Zionism and the labour movement, so different in their tendencies, converge in so far as they are both movements for liberty, whose strength is rooted in their revolt against unjust oppression. They are also both emanations of a longing, of sorrow at the present and an almost visionary hope for the future. Their point of departure, as with every advance of civilisation, is the rousing of the masses from their hollow contentment or passive suffering."⁹⁵

Zionism would remind the Jewish worker, trapped in the degradation and exploitation of the sweatshops, that he was also the son of a warrior-people who had once shown great heroism in defending their liberty.

IV

But the debate on Zionism and the Jewish national problem in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* began in earnest only after the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905 and the deterioration in the conditions of Russian Jewry. Virtually all the Jewish socialist movements in Russia had by then accepted elements of nationalist ideology, trying to synthesise it with Socialism.⁹⁶ Max Schatz-Anin, a member of the territorialist Zionist-Socialists who had been deported from Russia and graduated in Berne with a doctoral dissertation: *Zur Nationalitätenfrage* in 1910, began to attack the assimilationist theories of Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer.⁹⁷

Anin's main preoccupation was with the non-proletarianisation of the Jewish masses in the Pale of Settlement, their impoverishment and abnormal socio-

⁹³'Literarische Rundschau', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1898), pp. 535–536.

⁹⁴Adele Schreiber, 'Ein Dichter des jüdischen Proletariats', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1903), pp. 449–454. Rosenfeld's poems, translated into German by Berthold Feiwel, were also reviewed by Julie Zadek in *Die Neue Zeit* (1903–1904), Bd. 2, p. 285, and criticised for their melancholy ghetto flavour.

⁹⁵Adele Schreiber, *loc. cit.*, p. 453.

⁹⁶See A. Tartakower, 'Zur Geschichte des jüdischen Sozialismus', *Der Jude*, VIII (1924), pp. 392 ff.

⁹⁷M. Anin, 'Ist die Assimilation der Juden möglich?', *loc. cit.*, pp. 614 ff.

economic situation. In opposition to Kautsky and Bauer, he asserted that the industrialisation of the Russian Empire was pauperising rather than improving the conditions of Jewish workers. They could not find employment in the mechanised factories, since neither Jewish nor Christian employers would hire them: they faced economic competition from the workers of other nationalities; and as Jews, they were also subject to special discrimination.

Without being drawn into the developing capitalist system the Jewish workers could not assimilate, and until they had assimilated they would be excluded from productive work. Civil emancipation on the Western European model could not solve this problem, nor would the Marxist rhetoric of class-struggle adopted by the *Bund* disguise for long the structural weakness of the Jewish proletariat. Without legal rights, social mobility, the requisite technical skills and a strategic position in the process of production, the Jewish working class was condemned to impotence.

"In place of the old ghetto walls, tower ever higher the walls of a socio-economic ghetto, which can in no way be destroyed by Jewish emancipation."⁹⁸

Schatz-Anin argued that the Jews could not solve this problem within the Russian Pale, where there was no possibility of absorbing the mass of Jewish artisans or of restructuring the occupational pyramid. Outside Russia, the Jews also lacked any territorial nucleus where they formed a compact national majority. Haphazard emigration was no answer because this would soon reach saturation point without resolving the vicious circle of poverty, unemployment and antisemitism in which Jewish existence was enmeshed. Mass emigration had already reproduced new Jewish urban ghettos in America and England and anti-alien agitation would soon cut off this short-term solution in the potential lands of emigration. On the other hand, colonisation of an undeveloped, free territory offered the prospect of a successful struggle for social emancipation in the future, once a healthy national base had been established. It would rescue the Jews from their stunted ghetto economy, from the misery of the sweatshops, from persecution and the inability to determine their own future.⁹⁹ Anin quoted the views of Bebel and Vandervelde in order to demonstrate that colonisation, in so far as it was free of the desire for profit or domination over other peoples, was not in contradiction to socialist principles. Nor was the principle of Jewish national self-determination at variance with the "spirit of the age":

"In a period which has been the awakening of even the smallest, completely historyless nations, the Jewish people are also approaching, after centuries of grievous suffering and persecutions, nearer to the autonomous shaping of their destiny."¹⁰⁰

Anin's theses were not incompatible with those of Poale-Zion, but he did not explicitly mention Palestine as the future land of Jewish colonisation. Leon Chasanowitsch, on the other hand, the Secretary of the world Poale Zion

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 618.

⁹⁹M. Anin, 'Probleme des jüdischen Arbeiterlebens', *loc. cit.*, 231 ff.

¹⁰⁰M. Anin, 'Die Organisation der jüdischen Wanderung', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1909), Bd. 3, p. 1254.

movement in Vienna and a disciple of Ber Borochov (the founder of Marxist Zionism), argued in a long essay in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* that territorial concentration in Palestine was the only solution to the problem of the Jewish working class.¹⁰¹

Along with Zalman Rubaschoff (Shazar), Berl Locker and Shlomo Kaplan-sky, Chasanowitsch was one of the most gifted advocates of Poale-Zion in Central Europe and his article was an important breakthrough in stating the case for labour Zionism inside German Social Democracy.

Chasanowitsch began by defining socialist Zionism as a movement which sought to solve the Jewish problem not through assimilation but by establishing a Jewish community with its own national culture in Palestine, on the basis of agricultural and industrial colonisation. Socialism and Zionism, the two great modern movements within East European Jewry which had simultaneously arisen and initially fought one another, had found their reconciliation in Poale-Zionism.¹⁰² But the Poale-Zionists still had to battle on two fronts – against bourgeois Zionism and against the “assimilationist”, cosmopolitan socialists in the international labour movement.

The long-term objective of Poale-Zion was to influence Zionism in a socialist direction and to bring socialists to an understanding of the need for Jewish national liberation. Already, Chasanowitsch pointed out, Poale-Zion had made headway in establishing itself in Russia, Austria, England, North America and Palestine, as well as among immigrant Jewish workers in Western Europe. It was striving to unite all the Jewish proletarians dispersed in many lands into a world Jewish section of the Socialist International – an aspiration supported by the Zionist-Socialists and SERP, but opposed by the *Bund* and assimilationist Jews in different European labour parties.¹⁰³ On the national question, Chasanowitsch declared himself opposed to the levelling utopia of international socialism which denied the importance of national self-determination and of the free development of national individuality.

In this context, Chasanowitsch praised the theoretical contribution of the Austro-Marxists, and in particular of Otto Bauer, for recognising that

“... erst der Sozialismus die breiten Volksmassen, die ‘Hintersassen’ der Nation, zur Stufe der Nation emporheben wird...”¹⁰⁴

But while Bauer had rightly perceived that socialism would transform the whole people into a nation, the Austro-Marxists and their Polish comrades had failed to apply this insight to the Jewish question. Instead, there was a loud outcry against “*Reaction, Chauvinism* or even *Clericalism*” as soon as Jewish national aspirations were mentioned. What was conceded to even the smallest, most obscure and backward nationalities was inadmissible for the Jews of Eastern

¹⁰¹Leon Chasanowitsch, ‘Ziele und Mittel des Sozialistischen Zionismus’, *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (July 1914), pp. 962–973.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 962.

¹⁰³For an example of *Bundist* opposition to this project of a world Jewish section in the International see Wladimir Medem, ‘Ein nationalistischer Vorschlag’, *Die Neue Zeit* (1909–1910), pp. 748–751.

¹⁰⁴Leon Chasanowitsch, *loc. cit.*, p. 964.

Europe who were expected to renounce all hopes for their national renaissance.¹⁰⁵

Chasanowitsch condemned this assimilationist standpoint (which was identical to that of Kautsky's *Neue Zeit*) as "not only an anti-national but also in the highest degree an anti-social phenomenon".¹⁰⁶ Assimilation and the disappearance of the Jews from the stage of history would be a great loss to humanity; it was in any case impossible except for a small élite in East European Jewry who enjoyed social and economic mobility. The only result of these assimilationist strivings would be to create a rift between the Jewish intelligentsia and the non-assimilated masses which had already had harmful and destructive effects for the Jewish nation as a whole.

Chasanowitsch did not deny that "... in Germany, France, Holland and Italy the assimilation of the Jews was to a certain extent a necessary process", since socio-economic mobility, the abolition of the ghettos and the smaller size of the Jewish communities made their successful adaptation to the non-Jewish milieu possible.¹⁰⁷ In Russia, Galicia and Rumania the general process of proletarianisation made such socio-economic integration inconceivable. The draconian measures of the authorities and the anti-Jewish economic boycotts in Russian Poland were also undermining the traditional basis of Jewish existence in petty trade and middleman occupations.¹⁰⁸

The entry of a growing number of East European Jews into productive labour was in the circumstances a hopeful sign: the Jewish proletariat was gaining in national consciousness and even the *Bund* had abandoned the theory of assimilation and adopted cultural-national autonomy in its political platform. According to Chasanowitsch, the Jewish workers of Galicia had become particularly disillusioned with assimilation which only served the interests of the Polish "Schlachta" (aristocracy, especially the landowners), in preserving a Polish majority in the province. Those who favoured assimilation within the Jewish community of Galicia were simply agents of Polish "reaction" opposed to the real needs of the Jewish masses. The Poale-Zion in Austria-Hungary fought against these "assimilationist oppressors" of the Jewish people and sought national autonomy for the Jews through the democratisation and "nationalisation" of the local Jewish communities.¹⁰⁹

A rather different critique of the assimilationist ideology was offered in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* by Mark(us) Borisovich Ratner, a Russian lawyer and socialist who had left his homeland after the 1905 Revolution. Ratner, together with Chaim Zhitlovsky, was one of the leaders of the populist-revolutionary

¹⁰⁵See Berl Locker, 'Die Allgemeinen Gesetze der Assimilation und die Ostjuden', *Der Jude*, I (1916-1917), pp. 504-509, and Leo Rosenberg, 'Emanzipation und Zukunft des Ostjudentums', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1917), pp. 681-690. Both writers, like Chasanowitsch, pointed out that the western pattern of emancipation did not apply to the non-assimilated Jewish masses of Eastern Europe.

¹⁰⁶Chasanowitsch, *loc. cit.*, p. 964.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 965.

¹⁰⁸M. Anin, 'Der Judenboykott in Polen', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1914), Bd. 1, pp. 350 ff.

¹⁰⁹Chasanowitsch, *loc. cit.*, p. 967. See also Max Rosenfeld, 'Für eine Nationale Autonomie der Juden in Österreich', *Der Jude*, I (1916-1917), pp. 290-297.

trend within the Russian Jewish labour movement. He was opposed to *Bundism* and Poale-Zionism as well as to assimilationism, believing that Jewish national autonomy could only be achieved through the formation of an extra-territorial Jewish parliament (*Sejm*) to decide on matters pertaining to the economic and political organisation of Russian Jewry.

Ratner was critical of the nationality concept of the *Bund* for its imprecision with regard to the lack of Jewish national rights in Russia and the practical disabilities which affected Jews in everyday economic life.¹¹⁰ He considered that a nationality concept, based so much on the centrality of the Yiddish language, was too abstract. Ratner was even more critical of Zionist socialism which he dismissed as the eclectic mishmash of two incompatible ideologies.¹¹¹ The Zionist-socialist thesis that the Jewish proletariat was doomed to pauperisation in the Russian Pale was in his view a myth. Once restrictions on freedom of movement for Jews in Russia were lifted, this idea would be exposed as false.

Nevertheless, in 1909–1910, he drew up a common programme with the territorialist socialist, Schatz-Anin, for the union of all Jewish socialist parties on the basis of a programme combining class-struggle with Jewish national liberation, extra-territorial national autonomy with organised emigration and various colonisation projects.¹¹² The opposition of the *Bund*, still the largest party of the Jewish proletariat, prevented these efforts at unity from achieving any concrete results.

The most interesting aspect of Ratner's contributions to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* was his critique of Marxist nationality-theories, with particular reference to the Jewish problem. He noted that the national problem had remained secondary in Marx's historical perspective and that small, backward nationalities (like the South-Slav peasant nations) had been relegated to the inferior status of "historyless peoples". He criticised Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer for recognising Marx's error with regard to the South Slavs and then repeating it *vis-à-vis* the Jewish problem. Marx at least could not have been expected in the 1840s to recognise the national characteristics of the Jews:

"Rather he regarded Judaism as an exclusively economic category, the characteristics of which he gleaned from his observation of contemporary bourgeois Judaism in Germany. Just as Marx in the Slav question perceived no new manifestations or forms of national life – a fact now admitted by all Marxist critics of Marx – so he also did not foresee the possibility of class differentiation within Jewry or the formation of a Jewish proletariat and of Jewish socialism."¹¹³

Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer, who were familiar with the existence of a modern Jewish labour movement, did not have the same excuse, yet they had not freed themselves from Marx's anachronistic perception of the Jewish question. As an example, Ratner quoted Kautsky's description of East European Jewry as a "caste", rather than a nation, observing that

¹¹⁰M. Ratner, 'Die Nationale Frage in den jüdischen Sozialistischen Parteien', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1908), Bd. III, pp. 1533–1541.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 1537.

¹¹²See Arjeh Tartakower, 'Zur Geschichte des jüdischen Sozialismus', *loc. cit.*, pp. 392 ff.

¹¹³M. Ratner, 'Die Nationale Autonomie und das jüdische Proletariat', *loc. cit.*, p. 1340.

"... nobody until now came to the monstrous idea of comparing the Jewish people in their millions with an Indian caste..."¹¹⁴

The Jews, who had lived dispersed among so many different peoples, migrated to many different lands, who had undergone the extremes of class differentiation had nothing in common with the static, ahistorical existence of a Hindu caste. Marxist theory, Ratner concluded, had profoundly underestimated the vitality of small nations in general, and of the Jews in particular. The theory of assimilation enunciated by the disciples of Marx and Kautsky had ceased to be a viable or realistic concept.

Contributors to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* invariably rejected the Kautskyian dogma that the Jews were doomed to disappear as a nation, emphasising instead those factors which were pointing towards a Jewish national consciousness.¹¹⁵ German socialists who were sympathetic to Zionism invariably stressed, for example, the cultural gap separating Jews from non-Jews in Eastern Europe. The Jew in Russia, Poland, Rumania and Bukovina with his Yiddish mother-tongue and different religious customs was generally regarded as the member of a foreign community by the indigenous population in Eastern Europe. The result of these linguistic and religious differences was that the Zionist thesis of Jewish peoplehood ("dass die Judenheit ein besonderes Volkstum mit eigenartiger Geistigkeit bildet...") seemed self-evident to most East European Jews.¹¹⁶ Similarly, the Zionist idea that colonisation of Palestine would create a national centre for the Jewish people found a ready echo among the new generation of East European Jews; to German and Austrian socialists like Ludwig Quessel and Engelbert Pernerstorfer it seemed the only way that the Jews could survive as an independent community.

Both Quessel and Pernerstorfer pointed to the distinctive cultural and spiritual qualities of the Jewish people as well as the cohesive national character of the *Ostjuden* as factors favouring Zionist aspirations.¹¹⁷ Pernerstorfer, for example, in 1916, applied for the first time his concept of national individuality to the Jewish problem, declaring that any attempt to denationalise the *Ostjuden* was futile: they did not want to be Germans, Poles, Rumanians or Russians.

"Sie sind also, halten wir daran fest, eine Nation und eine Nation von besonderer Geistigkeit, wie jede innerlich starke Kulturnation. Sie hat ein Recht auf nationale Existenz."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 1341.

¹¹⁵See for example Raphael Seligmann, 'Über die Juden in Russland', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (September 1914), pp. 1084–1091. Seligmann emphasised the strength of folk-consciousness in Russian Jewry, what he termed the "urwüchsige und unversiegbare nationale Kraft", manifested in movements like Hasidism, Bundism, Zionism and the revival of Hebrew literature. Neighbouring peoples like the Ukrainians, Poles, Byelorussians, Lithuanians and Latvians had no doubt that the Jews constituted "eine eigenartige Nation".

¹¹⁶This point was well made by the German socialist, Dr. Ludwig Quessel, in his article, 'Die jüdische Neukolonisation Palästinas', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (June 1914), pp. 675–676.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Engelbert Pernerstorfer, 'Zur Judenfrage', *Der Jude*, I (1916–1917), p. 313. H. H. van Kol in his *La Démocratie Socialiste Internationale et le Sionisme*, *op. cit.*, p. 8, observed that of all the pre-1914 socialists in Central Europe – "Seul, le Dr. Pernerstorfer, avec son énergique sentiment du droit, fut un lutteur fidèle de la cause juive."

This was undoubtedly close to the standpoint of that circle around Joseph Bloch who were sympathetic to Zionism and convinced that the free development of nationalities was a prerequisite for socialist internationalism.

On the eve of the First World War, this view was slowly gaining ground within German Social Democracy. With regard to the Jewish problem, there was a growing concern at the oppression of Russian and Polish Jewry which was enforced by developments during the war. The awakening of patriotic sentiments all over the European continent weakened the Marxist tradition of internationalism, which had identified the disappearance of national barriers with social progress. The Marxist critique of Zionism as a diversion from the class-struggle lost its potency for many socialists, including Eduard Bernstein, who were disturbed by the national oppression of the Jewish minority in Eastern Europe.

Pernerstorfer even predicted that a Jewish minority numbering nearly three million would become a thorn in the side of the intensely nationalistic Poles if they ever succeeded in re-establishing their nation-state.¹¹⁹ This was one of his strongest arguments in favour of a Jewish Palestine and it was echoed by Hermann Kranold in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* in 1917.¹²⁰ In the same year, the Belgian socialist and Secretary of the International Socialist Bureau, Camille Huysmans, declared at a Congress in Stockholm:

"The Jewish people ought to be given the right to determine their own destiny. That is perfectly in harmony with the general principles of the right of self-assertion for all nationalities . . ."¹²¹

Eduard Bernstein, in an unpublished manuscript written at this time, had also come to a similar conclusion and at the end of the war welcomed the admission of Poale-Zion to the Socialist International.¹²²

The *Sozialistische Monatshefte* had for years been advocating such a step and had published several articles critical of the attitude of the Second International to the Jewish problem before 1914.¹²³ The most distinctive feature of the pro-Zionist advocacy of German socialists in Bloch's review remained however their positive attitude to colonisation as such. Hildebrand for example regarded colonising activities in quasi-Darwinist terms as a test of the vitality and cultural strength of a nation.¹²⁴ It was an expression of a developing *Volkskraft*, a life-enhancing transmission of higher ethical values to more backward areas of civilisation. Admittedly, unlike other forms of colonisation, Zionism was a

¹¹⁹Pernerstorfer, *ibid.*

¹²⁰Hermann Kranold, 'Die Juden in Polen und Palästina', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1917), pp. 681–690.

¹²¹Quoted in Lewis Rifkind, *Zionism and Socialism*, London 1918, p. 14. Huysmans's favourable judgment on Zionism was published, along with similar statements of Dutch and Scandinavian socialists, by the Jewish Press Bureau in Stockholm on 30th November 1917.

¹²²On Bernstein's sympathies with Poale-Zion after 1917 see ch. 3 of my *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*.

¹²³See M. Anin, 'Das Nationalitätsprinzip in der Sozialistischen Internationale', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1910), Bd. 2, p. 890. See also Anin, 'Was will die jüdische Sektion in der Sozialistischen Internationale?', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1911), pp. 396–400.

¹²⁴Gerhard Hildebrand, 'Kolonisation und Kultur', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1910), Bd. I, pp. 293–302.

drawing-together of the energies of the Jewish people, rather than the extension of a mother country overseas. Though it had thus far attracted only a small minority of the twelve million Jews in the world, its importance, according to Hildebrand, lay in its qualitative transformation of the Diaspora Jew into a productive worker and independent farmer. Zionist efforts in Palestine deserved special sympathy "in view of the extremely miserable condition of the Jews in Russia, Rumania, Galicia and in many other places . . ." ¹²⁵ They also merited serious study by agronomists, economists and politicians interested in the development of new agricultural and colonising techniques.

Ludwig Quessel, like Hildebrand, regarded Zionism as a thoroughly laudable project to regenerate the Jewish nation by welding together an agriculturally productive population. Drawing extensively on a study by Curt Nawratzki of Jewish colonising methods in Palestine, Quessel presented its successes and failures in a much more objective spirit than Kautsky. The early Jewish settlers from Russia who had come to Palestine in the 1880s and 1890s had to face exceptional difficulties, partly due to their inexperience, to primitive agricultural techniques and the harsh conditions of soil and climate. Nevertheless, as Quessel pointed out, in spite of Turkish neglect and the presence of a non-Jewish majority in Palestine, the land offered great potential for large-scale Jewish settlement and economic development. ¹²⁶

The scepticism of German Jews concerning the ability of Zionism to solve the Jewish question in Europe was in Quessel's view a product of their mistaken belief that it would further inflame antisemitism. This viewpoint was understandable during the 1890s when political antisemitism in Germany had branded the Jews as a separate and distinct "race", a position which Zionism appeared to reinforce. But the fears of the "so-called assimilationists" were based on a misunderstanding ("einer vollständigen Verkennung der Völkerpsychologie"), for the success of Zionism would in fact raise the prestige of Jews in Germany. ¹²⁷

The Jews had been well prepared by their historical experience for the task of carrying out the colonisation of Palestine. No other people had shown such an energetic capacity to adapt to new environments, to displace itself physically and intellectually without losing its inner cohesion. Throughout their history in the Diaspora, the Jews had displayed a civilising vigour unmatched even by the ancient Greeks and Romans, or the German colonists in the Slav lands of Eastern Europe. ¹²⁸

¹²⁵Gerhard Hildebrand, 'Zionismus', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (March 1910), p. 404.

¹²⁶Ludwig Quessel, 'Die jüdische Neukolonisation Palästinas', *loc. cit.*, p. 680. "Es kann keinem Zweifel unterliegen, dass ein sehr grosser Teil der wüsten Gebiete in Palästina, wieder fruchtbar gemacht werden kann. Zurzeit ist das eigentliche Palästina, das an Grösse die Provinz Pommern übertrifft, ein noch ziemlich menschenleeres Land. Neben den 100,000 Juden finden wir dort eine einheimische Bevölkerung von nur 600,000 Köpfen. Es ist klar, dass durch Urbarmachung der wüsten Ländereien, die zumeist im Besitz arabischer Grossgrundbesitzer sind, dort eine jüdische landwirtschaftliche Bevölkerung angesiedelt werden könnte, die ein vielfaches der heutigen beträgt."

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 682. In support of his thesis, Quessel suggested that those nations which had hitherto regarded the Jews as "intruders" would be ready to admire the rebirth of an independent Jewish nation.

¹²⁸Ludwig Quessel, 'Kolonisation', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (1913), p. 394.

Quessel also pointed out that Jewish colonisation in Palestine in the twentieth century had already produced a new generation of Hebrew-speaking settlers able to revive their ancestral tongue and create the foundations for a new Jewish national culture. Although they were still small in number, the Palestinian-Jewish settlements would provide an inspiring example for similar colonising efforts in other parts of the world. In a period when the Old and the New World was beginning to close the door to the mass emigration of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe, the significance of the Zionist experiment would grow in importance. It offered the prospect of a secure haven for solving the East European Jewish question in the future. Quessel concluded his remarks by praising the Zionists as instigators of a national movement which was in the best interests of civilised mankind –

“... und die zugleich die geknechteten osteuropäischen Juden von dem Gefühl der Heimatlosigkeit befreien und eine neue Stammheimat schaffen wollen, in der sie aus der tiefen Nacht sozialen und nationalen Elends zur Freiheit und Menschenwürde emporzudringen vermögen.”¹²⁹

Leon Chasanowitsch echoed these arguments in his presentation of the historical case for Poale-Zionism in 1914. Zionism, he asserted, was a historic need of the times, in view of the rapid proletarianisation of the Jewish masses in Russian Poland and Galicia. Alternative solutions such as mass emigration to America and England were already being undermined by anti-alien agitation and more stringent immigration laws. Efforts to settle East European Jews on the land in Russia, Austria-Hungary or Argentina had been a fiasco and led to demoralisation.¹³⁰

It was a mistake, however, to regard the return to agriculture in Palestine and the transformation of Jewish city-dwellers into farmers as a regressive phenomenon. For the foreseeable future, agricultural production would retain its importance in the world economy. Even the German Social Democrats would come to regret their neglect of the agrarian problem. For their part, the Poale-Zion had recognised that for reasons of national and social psychology, Palestine offered the best prospect for compact Jewish agricultural settlements. The Jews were more suited to intensive agriculture and adopted “innovations and improvements with greater facility than the peasantry of any other people”.¹³¹ As settlers, they were specially well adapted to the cooperative mode of production, which was of great importance to modern agriculture.

Chasanowitsch was the only writer in the German socialist press before 1914, apart from Quessel, to comment in passing on the existence of an indigeneous non-Jewish population in Palestine, though he did not perceive this fact as an obstacle to Zionist settlement. The introduction of new methods of production by Jewish settlers would, in his view, bring economic and cultural benefits to the Arab population. As if in anticipation of the anti-colonialist argument

¹²⁹Ludwig Quessel, ‘Die Jüdische Neukolonisation . . .’, *loc. cit.*, p. 684.

¹³⁰See Leon Chasanowitsch, *Die Krise der jüdischen Kolonisation in Argentinien*, Stanislaw 1910.

This book was also published in Yiddish and aroused considerable interest at the time. It was primarily an attack on the administration of the settlements of the Jewish Colonisation Association in Argentina, a subject on which Chasanowitsch was an expert.

¹³¹Leon Chasanowitsch, ‘Ziele und Mittel des Sozialistischen Zionismus’, *loc. cit.*, pp. 970–971.

against Zionism (which did not yet assume any importance in the socialist literature of the period), Chasanowitsch added:

“Angesichts der Tatsache, dass die Juden, hinter denen keine Staatsmacht steht, sich nur friedlicher Mittel bedienen können und bedienen, dass ihnen ihr ureigenstes Interesse gebietet in Frieden mit der eingeborenen Bevölkerung zu leben, wäre es höchst lächerlich von einer jüdischen Kolonialpolitik nach Analogie der von der Sozialdemokratie bekämpften gewaltsamen Methoden in der Kolonialpolitik zu sprechen. Die Juden erfüllen eine im besten Sinn des Wortes zivilisatorische Aufgabe, wenn sie Palästina der modernen Kultur erschliessen.”¹⁸²

Chasanowitsch predicted that in spite of the non-Jewish majority in Palestine on the eve of the First World War, the Jews might well become a majority in the land at some time in the future. Even if a majority of World Jewry did not settle in the country, there could be little doubt that the Zionist endeavour would materially and morally contribute to raising the self-esteem and sense of dignity in Diaspora Jewry. This was the healthy kernel in the Zionist movement which Poale-Zion sought to influence in a democratic and socialist direction. Labour Zionism was devoted to the task of securing the national future of the Jewish people in order that it could play its part in furthering the socialist ideal of international brotherhood. These were aims with which Joseph Bloch's *Sozialistische Monatshefte* sympathised and which it sought to bring to the attention of the German socialist public. It is impossible to determine precisely what effect these pro-Zionist views had in creating a more favourable climate of opinion on the German Left towards the Jewish national movement. But they must have been an important countervailing influence against the negative assessments of Zionism by the prevailing Kautskyian orthodoxy in the SPD.

V

The contrasting attitudes to Zionism of the Marxist and revisionist currents within the pre-1914 German Social Democratic party clearly reflected differing evaluations of nationalism and the Jewish problem in Russia and Eastern Europe.

For the followers of Karl Kautsky, Jewish nationalism endangered the ideological premises of international class-struggle and the commitment of the Jewish proletariat to revolutionary Socialism. The Jews, it was argued, had no future as a separate nation: their only defence against antisemitism was to throw in their lot with the struggle of the working class in Tsarist Russia and other European lands. The perspective offered by Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and other German Marxists to the Jewish proletariat was therefore unreservedly internationalist. Kautsky wrote in 1902:

“If such an oppressed class as the Jewish proletariat in Russia is able to rise and overcome stupendous obstacles with a superhuman energy, then we may boldly and sure of our victory, look at the future. Socialism – that’s the idea that gives to the feeble David of the Jewish proletarian class the strength to fight the foul Goliath of the Russian despotism and capitalism.”¹⁸³

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 971.

¹⁸³Karl Kautsky, ‘A Pariah among Proletarians’, *Justice*, 22nd February 1902.

The idea of Socialism and an imminent Russian Revolution would inspire Jewish and non-Jewish workers alike with the certainty of ultimate victory. The Jewish destiny would be played out in Russia, not Palestine.¹³⁴ According to Kautsky, the Zionists were therefore pursuing a chimera; in seeking to revive a nation which had only survived into the twentieth century as a result of persecutions, forced segregation in the Pale of Settlement and counter-Revolution, they were vainly turning back the clock of history. Zionism, by diverting Jewish energies from the revolutionary class-struggle, was tantamount to a "desertion of the colours".¹³⁵ It was a returning to the traditions of the ghetto – of religious obscurantism and chauvinist separatism.¹³⁶

After 1917 Kautsky went even further in his denunciation of Zionism – attacking the concept of Jewish "historical rights" in Palestine as moth-eaten and reactionary. It would mean a complete denial of democracy and self-determination for the Arab inhabitants of Palestine.¹³⁷ His prognosis for Jewish colonisation in Palestine became even more pessimistic in the 1920s than it had been in 1914. He argued that the land was too infertile to support large-scale Jewish immigration and that the Jews would remain permanently outnumbered in Palestine. The Zionist experiment, Kautsky wrote in 1921, would come to a tragic end as soon as Anglo-French hegemony over the Middle East collapsed.

The perspective of Joseph Bloch and the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* was almost diametrically opposed in its assessment of the Jewish national movement. Bloch had always felt great sympathy for the tradition of enlightened, universalist nationalism which had emerged at the time of the French Revolution. He regarded Zionism as a worthy descendant of this liberal European nationalism.¹³⁸ Moreover, he continued to believe that the Jews should not abandon their own national consciousness as a price for absorbing the highest values of West European culture. Zionism was spiritually a synthesis between European humanist universalism and the national ideals implicit in biblical Judaism. The return to Zion would forge a new link between East and West as well as a bridge between the dispersed fragments of World Jewry.¹³⁹ Bloch believed that, through their national emancipation, the Jews would complete the process of individual liberation from the ghetto which had begun in France in 1791. They would resolve finally the problem of antisemitism, whose recrudescence in Weimar Germany continued to worry Bloch and the contributors of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*.

With respect to the Jewish problem, the central issue for Marx, Kautsky and the Russian revolutionaries had been to accomplish the dissolution of Jewry. Identifying Judaism with the cult of Mammon, Marx had even described the "emancipation of society from Judaism" as the final goal of Jewish emancipation. For Joseph Bloch, the aim of Socialism and Zionism was precisely the

¹³⁴Karl Kautsky, *Are the Jews a Race?*, p. 213.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 207–210.

¹³⁸See Charles Bloch, 'Der Kampf Joseph Blochs und der "Sozialistischen Monatshefte" in der Weimarer Republik', *loc. cit.*, pp. 284–286.

¹³⁹*Ibid.* These ideas were expressed in Joseph Bloch's political testament, dictated to his friend and pupil Felix Stössinger. They appeared in *Selbstverlag* in Prague in 1938, two years after Bloch's death.

opposite: it was to liberate the non-Jewish world from antisemitism. Only Zionism could achieve this final emancipation by reconciling the Jews with the world of nations through the establishment of an independent Jewish nation-state. The Jews would thereby be able to fulfil their own ethical and cultural mission and overcome the self-estrangement imposed by centuries of exile. Bloch saw in socialist Zionism the only practical method for resolving the East European "Jewish Question". Through productive labour on the land the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, who had suffered from endemic poverty and persecution, from civil and political inequality, would find their redemption.¹⁴⁰ Not the dialectics of international revolutionary class-struggle but planned colonisation in Palestine would determine the future destiny of the Jewish people.

VI

The conflicting attitudes towards Jewish nationalism which we have described in this essay derive their historic importance from their international rather than purely German dimension. Zionism did not preoccupy German Social Democrats before 1917 as an internal German issue but as a possible solution to the problems of East European and Russian Jewry which had far-reaching implications for socialist ideology and tactics. In Germany there was no indigenous Jewish working class and therefore the problem of reconciling a specifically Jewish socialism to the challenge of nationalism did not arise. German Jewry did not regard itself as a national minority and support for Zionism in the era preceding the Balfour Declaration remained at a numerically insignificant level. In Russia and Eastern Europe the situation was entirely different as the various contributors to the German socialist press who dealt with the Jewish question constantly emphasised. This awareness of a distinct East European Jewish problem was sharpened by the First World War which brought more clearly into focus the pre-1914 attitudes to the Jews as a national minority and to the Zionist movement. After 1917 the Marxian wing of the SPD which espoused Kautsky's assimilationist theory of the Jewish Question felt itself vindicated by the successes of the Russian Revolution in sweeping away the anti-Jewish restrictions of the Tsarist régime. The revisionist Social Democrats who had a positive attitude to Zionism must have felt encouraged by the Balfour Declaration and the admission of Poale-Zion to the Second International.

To a large extent this contrast in attitudes towards the Jewish Question remained unchanged under the Weimar Republic. Communists and Social Democrats continued to defend theses which had been elaborated by their ideological ancestors before 1914. The German Communist Party became the inheritor of the Kautskyian legacy which condemned Zionism as a reactionary, petty-bourgeois movement.* If anything, the Marxist rejection of Zionism

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 285.

*For the continuation of this ideological development and for the attitude of Marxist-Leninist historiography to the Jewish Question in general the reader is referred to the essay by Konrad Kwiet, 'Historians of the German Democratic Republic on Antisemitism and Persecution', in this volume of the Year Book – Ed.

deepened, whereas Social Democrats on the Right Wing of the SPD became more pro-Zionist after the First World War.

This cleavage of outlook was to assume greater significance under the Weimar Republic when the Jewish Question ceased to be primarily an East European phenomenon and became a central issue of German domestic politics.